

RPCOMMUNITY



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The Down to Earth Women Luncheon will take place May 12 in Corralitos.

Down to Earth Women Luncheon returns

REGISTER-PAJARONIAN STAFF REPORT
CORRALITOS — The 2016 Down to Earth Women Luncheon will be held on Thursday, May 12 at Driscoll's Rancho Corralitos located at 242 Corralitos Road from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

This event is for women involved in, or supporting, agriculture in Santa Cruz County

and the Pajaro Valley. The purpose of the luncheon is to raise funds for Agri-Culture's Focus Agriculture program, the Jimmie Cox Memorial Scholarship fund and the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau's educational programs.

The featured speaker will be Christina Stembel, owner of Farmgirl Flowers who was

recently featured on the "Today Show" and in the New York Times. Also speaking at the event will be a graduate of the Focus Agriculture Program about their experience in the program and a recipient of the Jimmie Cox Memorial Scholarship. The Mistress of Ceremonies for the event will be Brittany Nielsen, news

anchor for KSBW Action 8 News.

Women are invited to attend this afternoon event. The ticket price is \$100. To make a reservation, become a sponsor or make a donation to the event, call 722-6622, email agri-culture@sbcglobal.net or visit www.agri-culture.us/content/dew-luncheon.



HATS ON

Annual fundraising luncheon held

By BEK PHILLIPS
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

RP FRONT PAGE 5/14/16

Each year organizers have watched the numbers grow for Agri-Culture's ninth annual Down to Earth Women Luncheon, and this year was no different. The event works as a fundraiser and as a platform to promote education in agriculture and women's role in the field. Held at Driscoll's Rancho in Corralitos Thursday, it is one of four fundraisers held throughout the year, but the only one exclusively for women.

Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian
Fancy hats were the order of the day Thursday at an annual luncheon that serves as a fundraiser for agricultural education at the Driscoll's plant on Corralitos Road.

Commercial cannabis ordinance moves forward

By BEK PHILLIPS

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY — The Board of Supervisors voted 5-0 Tuesday to begin the process of licensing medical cannabis suppliers within county jurisdiction.

The vote, which approved what Supervisor Zach Friend called the “largest change in land use policy in decades,” directs the County Counsel to draft an ordinance that establishes a licensing regime and interim registration system for existing growers.

“We want to protect Santa Cruz County’s quality of life and core values while addressing the community’s

CANNABIS

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clear desire to maintain access to medical cannabis,” Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors Chair Bruce McPherson said. “We believe this proposal fits the needs of small, local growers while making sure neighborhoods and open spaces aren’t overwhelmed by commercial operators.”

Before approval, the board listened to the concerns and opinions of constituents. Many voiced concern over an individual’s right to grow their own medicine, the large setback proposed around grow sites and the effect on children and the environment.

Bob Farmer was one person with specific concerns over the setbacks.

“I have beautiful property, it is sacred to me, but 600 feet on both sides would overlap a good portion of my property, so there would only be a few places I could grow,” he said. “I belong to the Responsible Cannabis Growers of Santa Cruz, and we are responsible and I would like to influence you.”

In response, Supervisor John Leopold and Friend recommended adjusting setbacks to comply with the current policies already in play.

“It was confusing to me to look at these blanket setbacks,” Leopold said. “When you look at 600 feet, two football fields, that’s a lot of space. It seems like a catch-all that doesn’t seem to be in line with either what our citizen group suggested or ways that we treat anything else in our code.”

The proposal also prohibits commercial cultivation in solely residential areas of the county, while continuing to allow personal cultivation of medical cannabis if limited to 10-by-10-foot spaces. In rural areas, the canopy size of commercial grows would be limited by parcel size and subject to property boundary, stream and right-of-way setbacks, as well as other requirements.

In addition, the board set limits on cannabis cultivation in and near the Coastal Zone, allowing it only on parcels designated for agricultural use. The board also agreed to allow commercial cultivation within existing greenhouse and warehouse sites located in coastal areas, up to a cumulative total of 100,000 square feet.

Another concern was the policy that only people who had been cultivating since 2013 will be able to apply for licenses. This was an issue for people who said they had stayed out of marijuana production because of the lack of clarity on the legality of production in the county. With the required date in play, they still would still be prohibited from entering the field and obtaining licenses.

David Van Lennep, president of Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau, said that staff recommendations “solely rewards those within the cannabis industry,” and argued that if the objective is to regulate the activity, it should be available to “responsible individuals not currently engaged in production or sales.”

“We’ve suggested limiting the number of overall licenses and opening them up to members of the community that have conforming parcels and maybe

prorating those across the different parcels,” Lennep said.

County Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello said that the 2013 date is there for “the good actors.”

“Between 2013 and 2015 there were a lot of people coming into the community in response to the fact that we had a cultivation ordinance and they were creating some challenges for us,” she said. “We are not opening up the process to everyone, for right now we want to take the folks that have been here for a while and process those first and handle those first.”

The board directed county staff to study the impact of allowing cultivation in timberharvest zones and return with recommendations, and directed local cultivators to create a “compassionate use” system for distributing low- or no-cost cannabis to economically disadvantaged residents. In addition, voters are likely to be asked to revisit the county’s cannabis business tax to allow for additional regulatory and enforcement activities.

The registration system is expected to be in place sometime this summer. The licensing ordinance must pass through environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as well as review by citizen-led advisory commissions, before returning to the board for full consideration.

“When all is said and done, this is one of the largest land use changes that Santa Cruz County has ever undertaken, and there will be undeniable impacts on our environment,” Friend said. “We need a thorough and comprehensive environmental review to ensure all impacts are analyzed.”

RP 4/28/16 CITY

Hotel, restaurant development moves forward

Farm Bureau withdraws opposition

By ERIK CHALHOUB
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

WATSONVILLE — The Watsonville City Council unanimously approved a proposal Tuesday that will add two hotels and a series of restaurants on West Beach Street.

The site, located on 1715 West Beach St., formerly housed the Indalex aluminum plant, which was demolished last year. The Watsonville Planning Commission recommended the development on April 5.

In September, the planning commission approved a 12-pump gas station, a convenience store and three restaurant spaces, including a drive-thru Starbucks restaurant, for the site. On Tuesday, the council approved three more shops, two restaurants and two hotels, which will both be four stories tall.

Located next to berry fields, the proposal by Elite Development drew opposition from the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau, who pointed out that the development encroached on a 200-foot agricultural buffer zone, which was established by the city council in 2004 for all residential development.

As it is designed, the development will include a buffer of 125-150 feet.

But after meeting with City Manager Charles Montoya and city staff to come to an agreement, the Farm Bureau removed its opposition, said President David Van Lennep.

"I appreciate the additional analysis that's being done to make sure that any encroachment into the ag buffer provides as good or better protection not only for the end users of the parcel but for the adjacent ag," he said.

Among the items in the agreement, the hotels will have non-operable windows, contain signage notifying the public of nearby agricultural operations and a 75-foot parking lot buffer.

In addition, Montoya is drafting an agricultural buffer ordinance, as well as proposing the creation of a city ag-

said the project is the "full gamut," offering new sales tax revenue, new restaurants and conference room space for local companies.

"We had what was a former blighted area that will turn into an economic gem," he said.

Also during Tuesday's meeting, the council approved a drainage system for Lakeside Organic Gardens' new 64,000-square-foot produce cooler, which will be constructed on 25 Sakata Lane.

ment said the project is estimated to generate more than \$1 million in tax revenue annually, as well as 200 jobs.

"We think this project will be able to gentrify that entire area, an area that's been undeveloped for a very long time," he said.

Jugy Tut of Elite Development said the development will not include fast food restaurants, and is instead looking at businesses such as Olive Garden and Jamba Juice.

Mayor Felipe Hernandez

HOTEL

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ricultural commission. The commission would be appointed by city council members, and will look at similar projects in the future should they appear.

"It's appropriate to make sure that there's an ag ordinance, and there is that connection with the ag community," he said.

Hajit Tut of Elite Develop-